

**Senate Bill 1041 Implementation
CalWORKs County Review Session Summary**

Lassen

April 27, 2016

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division
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Introduction

Purpose of County Review Session

The purpose of the Senate Bill (SB) 1041 Implementation County Review Session is to obtain information regarding the county's ongoing progress in implementing program changes enacted by SB 1041 (Chapter 47, Statutes of 2012). In addition to benefits and challenges associated with SB 1041, Assembly Bill (AB) 74 (Chapter 21, Statutes of 2013) required the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to develop and implement an appraisal tool. County Welfare Departments (CWD) use this tool to assess client's strengths and barriers. The new, in-depth Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT) plays an integral role in identifying client service needs.

Scope of County Review Session

Specifically, the CDSS will determine how each CWD implemented SB 1041 program changes and AB 74 OCAT processes, including but not limited to:

- Welfare to Work (WTW) participation requirements;
- Post WTW 24-Month Time Clock services;
- Training methods provided to staff in order to implement SB 1041 changes;
- Data outcomes related to SB 1041 program changes;
- Family Stabilization Program;
- Expanded Subsidized Employment Program; and
- Implementation of Online CalWORKs Appraisal Tool (OCAT).

Goals of County Review Session

The CDSS' goals of the Review Session are to ensure that SB 1041 was implemented correctly by each CWD, to gather and share promising practices in regard to implementation among all CWDs throughout the state, and to determine whether systematic or program issues relating to the integration of SB 1041 changes to the existing California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) and WTW program exist throughout the state. The CDSS will also assess the CWD implementation processes associated with OCAT as a result of AB 74.

County Review Session General Information

A County Review Session was held on Wednesday, April 27, 2016, via a teleconference call. The county review team included seven staff from the CDSS, WTW Division, CalWORKs Employment and Eligibility Branch, and Lassen County's Director and staff. At the time of the County Review Session, Lassen County had one office.

During the economic recession, Lassen County consolidated all Lassen WORKs staff to one office and was challenged with a staffing shortage leaving approximately one third of its staff remaining. Its eligibility and employment services program/welfare department is referred to as “Lassen WORKs.” All services were consolidated into one building in December 2014. All CalWORKs services are located in Susanville. Lassen WORKs is housed within the county’s one-stop Alliance for Workforce Development building, comprising the Lassen Business and Career Network. Lassen Business and Career Network meet a critical requirement of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The first point of contact for clients is lobby reception and/or a caseworker. Lassen County does not have a call center.

Lassen Works serves individuals, families and communities of Lassen County by:

- Employing a team of professional, knowledgeable, and courteous staff;
- Offering quality confidential services in a responsible, timely, and compassionate manner;
- Providing a safe place dedicated to building trust and reducing fears; and
- Working together to help people reach their life goals and achieve personal success.

During the time of the county session, it was noted that Lassen WORKs managed 393 Welfare-to-Work cases, with an average of 28 cases assigned to each caseworker. Integrated Caseworkers (ICWs) handle eligibility for multiple programs such as CalWORKs, General Assistance, CalFresh, Medi-Cal, Foster Care, Adoptions Assistance and Employment Services/Welfare to Work. Staff within Lassen County does not carry specialized caseloads within units; all CalWORKs programs are integrated. Client referrals are made to agencies providing support for Child Care, Transportation, Behavioral Health, Domestic Violence, Child Support, and Employability.

Demographic Area and Economy

Lassen County is located in the northeastern portion of California. As of the 2010 census, the population was 34,895, making it one of California’s smaller counties. The county’s only incorporated city is Susanville. Based on EDD Labor Market and Workforce Division data, dated April 2016, the unemployment rate in the county is approximately 10 percent. Historically a timber logging town, as of 2016 during the time of the county session, Lassen County’s largest employer is the prison industry, with the Lassen County Adult Detention Facility, High Desert State Prison, California Correctional Center, and the Federal Correctional Institute, Herlong providing many of the county’s jobs within the community.

As a result of the large prison presence within the county, Lassen WORKs estimates that approximately 17,000 prisoners are incarcerated within the area. Beyond that, law enforcement, city, county, retail jobs, and agriculture comprise Lassen County’s economy. Agriculture in the county includes alfalfa, wheat, oats, barley, rye, and livestock; the farms are smaller in scale. The economic forecast for Lassen County between 2013 and 2018 is expected to average 1.3% percent per year in employment growth resulting in a total increase of 6.5% in new jobs.

Lassen WORKs provides services to outlying areas of the county through three One Stop Family Resource Centers in Westwood, Herlong and Bieber.

Demographically, Lassen County is where the Sierra Nevada and Cascade mountains meet the desert of the Great Basin. Recreation options include water skiing, trout fishing at Eagle Lake, hiking, biking, camping, and rock climbing. The high desert areas of the county attract off-road vehicles and horseback riders. The winter season provides access to snowmobile trails, cross-country and downhill skiing areas, and snowshoe hikes in Lassen Volcanic National Park and Lassen National Forest. The objective of the Lassen Chamber of Commerce is to promote its many attractions and special events, provide information and services to visitors and assist tourism related businesses.

Some of Lassen County's greatest challenges include, but are not limited to, staffing, data collection capabilities, and client access to services afterhours. Lassen WORKs experienced staffing shortages subsequent to SB 1041, thus implementation efforts and client outcome results, along with adequate data, were limited during the time of the county review session. However, it was reported that efforts are underway to ensure data tracking and monitoring, and client participation are continually improving. Lassen County's regular business hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 5:00pm, which in some cases does not work for clients who need assistance afterhours and on weekends.

Implementation Strategies

Lassen County's implementation strategy consisted of in-house, one-on-one training by key staff. In addition, University of California, Davis training is provided through unit meetings. During the time of the county session, the county was in the process of developing additional training opportunities for staff as part of the implementation process. Lassen County utilizes a multi-tiered process for disseminating information from CDSS' All County Letters (ACLs) and All County Information Notices (ACINs). Ongoing communication occurs with key staff on case-specific issues related to understanding and applying SB 1041 requirements; the multi-tier process of sharing information contributed to county training efforts and implementation. Analysts review the regulatory information with assistance from supervisors until the information is clearly understood. Additional training is provided in unit meetings, if and when necessary. Since Integrated Caseworkers (ICWs) handle Employment & Eligibility, staff does not maintain specialized caseloads within units. The multi-tiered approach has allowed for appropriate training of county staff throughout the process.

Some of Lassen County's key success included:

- Joint efforts with Lassen Community College, Lassen Family Services, Lassen County Child Support, Lassen County Public Health and Lassen County Probation Day Reporting Center, promote Fatherhood Initiatives that support whole family structures.

- Regular meetings with staff provided a good avenue for the sharing of knowledge and general information on SB 1041 requirements. Further explanation and/or clarification is provided by the CDSS’ ACLs and ACINs.
- A collaborative relationship with Lassen Community College includes a CalWORKs coordinator located at the college as well as maintaining a working relationship with Lassen WORKs staff, based on a mutual focus of assisting the client to be successful.
- Client transportation options are available to and from college for clients. Options available include daily, weekly, and monthly bus passes. Lassen Community College also provides its own transportation to students.
- Lassen WORKs provides onsite child-care referrals on an ongoing basis through a collaborative approach to child care, which is contracted with Lassen Child and Family Resources.
- Legal Services of California representatives travel to the county regularly to assist clients with legal matters, providing availability of high quality advocates.
- Successful partnerships exist with Alliance for Workforce Development, Lassen Family Services, Child and Family Services, Lassen Community College, Family Resource Centers, Public Health, Behavioral Health, Child Support Services, Crossroad Ministries and Salvation Army.
- As a smaller county, Lassen’s strong connections to community partners allows for “warm hand-offs” to appropriate providers. Lassen County avoids duplicating services, while supporting a “no wrong door” policy.

Acknowledgments

The CDSS thanks the Lassen WORKs Division of the Lassen County Department of Health and Social Services Agency for working with CDSS to schedule a teleconference session. The CDSS appreciates the open collaboration with CWD staff in ensuring the CalWORKs program’s continued success.

Background and Data

Lassen at-a-glance

Total Caseload417

(Source: CalWORKs Cash Grant Caseload Movement Report [CA 237 CW] Line Item 8a-November 2015)

WTW Enrollees	77
(Source: CalWORKs WTW Monthly Activity Report [WTW 25/25A] Line Item 1-November 2015)	
Mandatory Participants (enrollees + sanctioned + non-compliance)	102
(Source: CalWORKs WTW Monthly Activity Report [WTW 25/25A] Line Item 1, 3A, and 31-November 2015)	
Reengagement Plan Received	Yes
Beginning Date of Reengagement	January 2014
Consortium System	C-IV

Summary of documents obtained for Lassen County's teleconference session:

- Lassen County Community Social Services Organizational Chart dated January 2016
- SB 1041 WTW Participation Requirements: 24 Month Time Clock Power Point Presentation Material

County Administrator and Caseworker Dialogue

The CDSS County Review Team used updated county administrator and caseworker interview tools following those released in ACIN I-42-13 regarding SB 1041 implementation. These tools were provided to Lassen County in advance of the County Review Process Teleconference Call.

WTW 24-Month Time Clock Implementation and New WTW Participation Requirements

Transitioning Clients

Lassen County's training included in-house training on SB 1041 WTW Participation Requirements and the University of California, Davis offered additional training. Training continues through unit meetings and individual one-on-one mentoring. Lassen County reports that clients seem to have a better understanding that they can receive a variety of supportive services, family stabilization services, or attend school within the first 24 months as needed. Job Club curriculum is currently under redevelopment.

Clients who failed to attend SB 1041 appointments

Lassen County outreached to clients utilizing ICWs and Social Workers (SWs). In an effort to get clients reengaged, home visits are conducted to educate clients on various services and resources available. ICWs perform monthly meetings with SWs to strategize on ways to further assist clients with any barriers in an effort to get them out of sanction status and fulfilling their requirements as outlined within the WTW plan.

New Young Child Exemption

Between December 1, 2015 through April 19, 2016, of 393 clients, 40% chose the exemption.

Post WTW 24-Month Time Clock

In Lassen County, one client exhausted the WTW 24-Month Time Clock. Lassen County reconciles and tallies months counted toward a client's WTW 24-Month Time Clock during intake, renewal, from the Semi-Annual Reporting (SAR 7), and during WTW appointments. During the county review session, the process for transitioning clients' CalWORKs minimum standards to CalWORKs federal standards is currently under development. Social Workers conduct monthly home visits to check on families. Currently, no clients have extensions.

Family Stabilization

Lassen WORKs offers a Family Stabilization (FaSt) program, which provides upfront intensive supportive services that help clients work through their current situation and get back on the road to self-sufficiency. Lassen WORKs utilizes referrals, screening tools, and evaluations to identify eligible participants for FaSt services. The FaSt program faces some challenges in the areas of staffing and referrals, but plans to fill vacancies. Overall, the FaSt program within the county has received positive feedback from clients impacted.

Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE)

Lassen WORKs has an ESE program plan in place, but it had not yet been implemented.

OCAT Implementation

Lassen WORKs fully implemented OCAT, per ACL 15-09 and ACL 15-43, during the fall of 2015. All ICW staff was trained in two consecutive sessions with curriculum received from T4T (Training for Trainers). Implementation of OCAT enabled Lassen County to build rapport with clients, develop motivational interviewing skills, identify strengths and barriers upfront, and refer clients to appropriate resources earlier on in the engagement process. However, challenges associated with OCAT include being time-consuming and redundant given other efforts. OCAT has been paired with Orientation and the entire WTW Flow has been redesigned. Additional challenges include clients failing to attend OCAT.

Sanctions

Lassen County attempts to prevent clients from falling into sanctioned status by early upfront engagement efforts. The County's sanction rate has not changed since the implementation of SB 1041. The sanctioned population is managed through ICWs and SWs who make efforts to re-engage clients within the first three months. ICWs make monthly contact with their WTW clients and SWs make monthly home visits. Data on specific number of sanctions cured as a result of SB 1041 was not available during the time of the county session.

Child Care Services

Lassen County is a place where there is adequate access to Child Care. There is currently no waiting list for care, and there are openings for the Stage 1 Child Care program. Lassen County seeks to improve child care by offering nontraditional child care within the county.

Conclusion

Successes

Lassen County's participation in SB 1041 WTW Participation Requirements training has enabled the management and staff to understand and disseminate information throughout the county. Because of this, clients seem to have a better understanding that they can receive a variety of supportive services, Family Stabilization services, or attend school within the first 24 months as needed.

Lassen WORKs one-stop location, Alliance for Workplace Development, is a key part of its success. With many service providers concentrated in one area, Lassen County's "no wrong door" approach to client services allows multiple entry points to community members so they are engaged at appropriate avenues along the continuum of service. Lassen County's use of Wrap Around principles has enabled the county to keep its sanctioned population low, with support provided to meet clients where they are and provide barrier removal early. Lassen County is thriving within the Stage 1 Child Care program.

In the areas of tracking, Lassen County is succeeding in reconciling and tallying months counted toward a client's WTW 24-Month Time Clock. This is done during intake, renewal, Semi-Annual Reporting (SAR 7), and WTW appointments.

The fact that Lassen is a smaller county with strong connections to community partners adds to the success of Lassen WORKs. With "warm hand-offs" to appropriate providers, Lassen County avoids duplicating services, supporting a "no wrong door" policy.

Challenges

Lassen County faces some challenges in the areas of staffing and data collection. Lassen County experienced a staffing shortage subsequent to SB 1041 implementation and as a result, data is limited at this time. However, during the time of the county session, efforts were underway to ensure tracking, monitoring, and continued client participation. Other challenges include client access afterhours. Normal business hours of Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 5:00pm do not work for clients who need access to services afterhours and on weekends. Lassen County is also feeling challenged in keeping staff updated on the many new CDSS programs in recent years. However, Lassen County is continuing to operate through its multi-tiered process for disseminating information from ACLs and ACINs. Additionally, the county provides internal guidance through ongoing communication with key staff on case-specific issues related to understanding and applying SB 1041 requirements.

Key Recommendations

Lassen County should continue to focus on strengthening its FaSt program once gaps in the areas of staffing and referrals are bridged. Developing Job Club, Expanded Subsidized Employment, and the process for transitioning clients from CalWORKs minimum standards to CalWORKs federal standards should remain high priorities. The County may also consider

focusing on ways to help clients find work through growing industries in Lassen County, such as recreation, hospitality, and restaurants. Though it seems monthly home visits with clients do further program goals, and while integrated services through all caseworkers makes sense with Lassen's current caseload, it may be wise to consider ways to meet implementation goals by training staff to triage service needs as a way to manage the high number of vacancies and staff shortages at Lassen WORKs. At the time of the CDSS SB 1041 Implementation County Review Session, CDSS recommended that Lassen WORKs take advantage of OCAT training for staff, and continue to work toward full implementation of its SB 1041 programs and requirements.

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